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Good morning, Senator Coleman and Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Joseph Riker, and I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Renaissance. I am here today to speak in favor of HB 5553, An Act Concerning Substance Abuse Programs.

Connecticut Renaissance was founded in 1967 by a group of parents to combat drug use among adolescents and in local schools. Over the years Renaissance has grown and expanded its activities to provide a wide range of behavioral health services within Connecticut. We currently provide substance abuse, mental health and related family counseling services through programs located in Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stamford and Waterbury. These services are largely provided to the State under contracts with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch (CSSD), the Department of Correction (DOC) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Renaissance has operated the Fairfield County Impaired Driver court diversionary program for first time DWI/DUI offenders under contract with DMHAS for well over ten years. And, until January 2012, we had provided treatment services to DWI/DUI multiple offenders under contract with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for approximately the same period of time.

Despite being a long time provider of DWI/DUI intervention services to the State, Renaissance was unaware of the development and evolution of Emergency Certified HB 6650 of the 2011 Session of the General Assembly and did not learn of its provisions until after its enactment. Our reaction to the changes incorporated into that legislation has been largely positive. We fully support the sections dealing with the procedures for individuals with multiple DWI/DUI convictions and the expanded use of ignition interlock devices within the state's overall strategy of dealing with DWI/DUI offenders.

We have two major concerns with the outcome of that legislation. The first issue is the elimination of the long standing mandatory treatment program for second offenders. We strongly believe that these offenders should be mandated into treatment, as was formerly the case, and as would be the case moving forward under the provisions of HB 5553.

We are also concerned that the elimination of the mandated treatment program has created the potential for a large pool of previously convicted multiple offenders to simply reapply for their license without receiving the treatment mandated at the time of their conviction. This situation would also be corrected by provisions of HB 5553.

In reviewing the need for the mandated program and treatment services, we would ask that the Committee consider the following factors:

- In the large majority of cases, individuals with a first conviction have previously been arrested for DWI/DUI and processed through the Court ordered diversionary program. Despite that history and the education they received as part of that program, they have not modified their behavior. Without additional targeted interventions, they have a high risk of continuing their dangerous behavior patterns.
- While the ignition interlock device is an excellent enforcement tool, the evidence suggests that its use must be accompanied by treatment if it is to lead to long term changes in behavior. Studies have indicated that offenders revert to their previous behavior patterns following the removal of the ignition interlock device.
- Individuals with chronic DWI/DUI issues relating to their alcohol and drug use need to participate in a program that assesses and treats the individual's overall addiction and possible co-occurring issues within a context that focuses specifically on their DWI/DUI behavior patterns and ways of modifying them. This can be most effectively accomplished with treatment utilizing groups entirely consisting of individuals with DWI/DUI behavior problems and one that provides for frequent follow up over an extended period.
- The reinstitution of the user fee based mandated multiple offender treatment program would not impose any significant costs on the State.

In summary, Connecticut Renaissance strongly believes that the reinstitution of the user fee based mandatory treatment program for multiple offenders in conjunction with the expanded use of the interlock devices and the new mandatory penalties associated with individuals with multiple convictions would create an exceptionally strong approach to dealing with the potentially deadly impact of DWI/DUI activity in Connecticut.